

## Hearings examiner says he's a finalist for Clallam County Superior Court judgeship

By Paul Gottlieb  
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PORT ANGELES — The only finalist who has been identified so far for the Clallam County Superior Court judgeship appointment is county Hearings Examiner Chris Melly, who failed in his 2012 bid for election to Position 1 on the bench and now could be appointed to Position 3.

Melly said he is a finalist among six applicants who are vying for the seat being vacated Dec. 31 by Judge S. Brooke Taylor, who is retiring, a job that pays \$151,809 now, with an increase to \$156,363 on Sept. 1.

No other finalists have been identified, either by the governor or by applicants.

Melly said he has a Dec. 4 interview in Olympia with Gov. Jay Inslee, who will make the selection.

Lawyers John Hayden, Loren Oakley, and Dave Neupert of Port Angeles, and Cathy Marshall and John Troberg of Sequim submitted applications for the position.

Marhsall and Troberg said Thursday they were notified that they are no longer candidates.

Oakley had not been notified as of Thursday whether he was still a candidate but was not contacted for the follow-up interview.

Hayden was not contacted for a follow-up interview but could not be reached Thursday for comment.

Neupert would not comment.

Nick Brown, Inslee's general counsel, who interviewed and narrowed down the pool of applicants for Inslee's consideration, would not disclose the finalists' identities or how many were selected, but indicated there will be more than one interviewed by Inslee.

"The governor will interview the finalists the first week of December, and hopefully we'll have an appointment by the end of the second week in December," Brown said.

"I will continue to do a little more reference checks on these folks."

Brown said in an earlier interview that he intended to select one or two finalists.

Neupert declined to say whether he has an interview with Inslee or if he was eliminated from consideration.

"In order to preserve the integrity of the governor's established procedure for these matters, it would not be appropriate for me to discuss the process at this time," Neupert, a former defense attorney and currently with the Platt Irwin Law Firm of Port of Port Angeles, said in an email.

Melly is "delighted" he is a finalist, he said.

"I certainly ran last year unsuccessfully," Melly added.

"This opportunity presented itself.

"I certainly would have been remiss if I didn't try for it."

Former Forks District Court Judge Erik Rohrer defeated Melly for the Position 1 Superior Court seat in November 2012.

Melly, who topped the county Bar Association poll for the seat, was scheduled to be interviewed Nov. 7, but his visit was delayed by the special legislative session, he said.

Taylor's term ends Dec. 31, 2016.

The office will be up for election on the November 2014 general election ballot.

Taylor's unexpired term ends Dec. 31, 2014.

The person who is appointed is expected to run for the position in 2014, Brown said.

"If they said they were not going to, they would not get appointed," he said.

"We intend to appoint people who will sit on that bench for years to come."

Applicants filled out a 16-page, 54-question "Uniform Judicial Evaluation Questionnaire" put out by the governor's office.

Hayden and Oakley are criminal defense attorneys for the nonprofit Clallam Public Defender, Marshall is section chief for the state Attorney General's Office regional services division in Port Angeles, and Troberg is a county deputy prosecuting attorney.

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